



THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF ANI AND KARS

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This volume deals with two Armenian cities and their surrounding territories which together have played a major role in medieval Armenian history and, in the case of Kars, in modern Armenian history as well. The general region considered here has no natural unity but rather consists of two historic central lands: the former Armenian principalities of Shirak and Vanand.¹ Lying adjacent to one another, they are divided more or less by the Akhurian River, a left-hand tributary of the Arax River. The two principalities consisted of broad, rolling country almost entirely surrounded by mountains except that Kars/Vanand was bordered on the south by the Arax, while the southeastern boundary of Ani/Shirak ran in an irregular line northeastward starting from the Akhurian River and ending at Mount Aragats.²

¹ For Shirak and Vanand, see Ananias of Shirak (Anania Shirakatsi), *Ashkharhatsoys* [Geography]; short version, ed. Ashot G. Abrahamyan, *Anania Shirakatsi matenagrutyune* [The Works of Ananias of Shirak] (Erevan: Matenadaran, 1944); long version, Arsen Soukry (Venice: Mekhitarist Press, 1881), repr. Robert Hewsen (Delmar, NY: Caravan Press, 1994); English trans. of both versions by Robert H. Hewsen, *The Geography of Ananias of Shirak: Asṣarḥacoyc: The Long and the Short Recensions* (Wiesbaden: Reichert 1992), pp. 65, 214n77; Suren T. Eremyan, *Hayastane est "Ashkharhatsoys"-i* [Armenia According to the "Geography"] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1963), pp. 73-74, 82; Tadevos Kh. Hakobyan, *Hayastani patmakan ashkharhagrutyun* [Historical Geography of Armenia], 2d ed. (Erevan: Mitk, 1968), pp. 136-43; Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1963), s.v. "Siracene," pp. 202, 206, 324n81. Shirak (Greek: Sirakene) originally contained two principalities, those of the Houses of Dimaksian and Kamsarakan, the latter a branch of the Arshakuni (Arsacid) royal house. In the later Middle Ages, both principalities became possessions of the House of Bagratuni, which thus came to own all of Shirak as well as Vanand.

² Eremyan, *Hayastane est "Ashkharhatsoys"-i*, map. The Arax River is the Old Armenian Eraskh, from Median *arakhs*, "swift" (modern Armenian: Araks). For the name, see Anahit Perikhanian, "L'inscription araméenne du roi Artashes," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 3 (1966): 26.

The Principality of Vanand

The core of Vanand was the wide plain earlier known as Upper Basean (Basen).³ It is probable that its ruling house was a branch of the Orduni princes of Basean, which lay to the west of Vanand, but that cannot be certain.⁴ In any case, the princes of Vanand are last heard of in the seventh century.⁵ Vanand was centered in the locality of Kars, which already existed in ancient times when it was known in Armenian as Karuts Berd (Castle of Kars) and in Georgian as Karsis-kalaki (City of Kars).⁶ It is probably the locality called Khorsa in Greek,⁷ the name—like so many other localities in Armenia—seeming to suggest the one-time presence of the Hurrians or Khurrians, an important but little known people of early historic times to whom the Urartians appear to have been related. The fortress of Kars does not rise to importance, however, until the Middle Ages.

The Principality of Shirak

The land of Shirak was originally a part of the royal domains of the Armenian kings of the Arshakuni dynasty and after the fall of the monarchy in 428, it passed to the House of Kamsarakan—itsself a branch of the royal family. The Kamsarakans held Shirak along with the neighboring principality of Arsharunik until the late eighth century when, after the anti-Arab insurrection of 771-72, they were forced by

³ Movses Khorenatsi, *Patmutiun Hayots* (Tiflis, 1913), II.6; English trans. Robert W. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 135-36; Nicholas Adontz (Nikoghayos Adonts), *Armenia v epokhu Iustiniana* (St. Petersburg, 1908), English trans. Nina G. Garsoïan, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970), p. 237.

⁴ Toumanoff, *Studies*, p. 318.

⁵ For the princes of Vanand, see Toumanoff, *Studies*, p. 215; Buzandaran (formerly attributed to Pavstos Buzand (Faustus of Byzantium), English trans. Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmutiwnk')* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), III.12.14; *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], vol. 11 (Erevan, 1985), pp. 267-68.

⁶ Eremyan, *Hayastane est "Ashkharhatsoys"-i*, p. 58; Babken Arakelyan, Vrezh Vardanyan, and Hovhannes Khalpakhchyan, "Kars," in *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol. 5 (1979), pp. 342-44; H.F.B. Lynch, *Armenia, Travel and Studies*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, 1901), p. 395.

⁷ Ptolemy, *Geography*, ed. Nobbe, V.11.12.

their deteriorating circumstances to sell both of these lands to the rising princes of the House of Bagratuni.⁸

Like Kars, Ani, too, was an ancient site, its name suggesting that of the Ainians, another little known people who once lived in this part of Armenia according to the first-century Greek geographer Strabo.⁹ Again, like Kars, Ani did not become important until the Middle Ages. Previously, it appears to have been a mere village known only for having been the birthplace of Armenia's first scientist, Ananias of Shirak, in whose autobiography it is mentioned for the first time.¹⁰

The center of Shirak before the rise of Ani appears to have been at the town of Ervandashat, from its name a foundation of one of the Ervanduni/Orontid kings, who ruled Armenia at the turn of the third and second century B.C.¹¹ Ervandashat is no longer heard of in the early Middle Ages by which time the center of the principality is uncertain but may have been located at the town of Shirakashat. When for a time the Byzantines took control of this part of Armenia in 591 and established here the province of Lower Armenia, it was at Shirakashat that they set the new provincial center, renaming it Mavrikoupolis after the then reigning emperor, Maurice (582-602).¹²

Medieval Ani and Kars

It was during the Arab occupation of Armenia (mid-seventh through ninth century) that there began the historical process that would lead to the rise of the Bagratuni kingdoms of Kars and Ani. With the reestablishment of the Armenian kingdom under Ashot Bagratuni in 884/85,

⁸ For the House of Kamasarakan or Arsharunik, see Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 206-07; *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol. 5, p. 215.

⁹ Strabo, *Geography* (Loeb Classical Library), 11.14.14.

¹⁰ Ananias of Shirak (Anania Shirakatsi), *Autobiography* (complete version), ed. J. Daschian, *Katalog der armenischen Handschriften in der Mechitaristen-Bibliothek zu Wien*, no. 30 (Vienna: Mekhitarist Press, 1895), pp. 174-76; English trans. (incomplete version), F.C. Conybeare, "Ananias of Shirak, His Autobiography; His Tract on Easter," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 6 (1897): 572-74; French trans. (complete version), Haïg Berbérían, "Autobiographie d'Anania Shirakatsi," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 1 (1964): 189-94. See also Hewsén, *Ashkharhatsoyts*, pp. 272-78.

¹¹ Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 75n83, 206, 286, 310, 311n32, 319.

¹² Ananias of Shirak, *Ashkharhatsoyts*, pp. 65, 215nn277 and 279. The Byzantine occupation of Vanand and Shirak was short lived—from 591 until the Arab occupation in 650—but the name Mavrikoupolis (English: Mauricopolis) stuck, and even at present the Turks call the locality—now but a small village—Mevrek, for which see *USAF Aeronautical Approach Chart, Yerevan (325 DIV)*. (St. Louis, 1954).

Armenia entered a silver age, one of the most brilliant periods in its economic and cultural history. At first, the Bagratuni dynasty chose Bagaran in Vanand as its capital but then, after a brief stay at Kars, the kings settled at Ani (961-1045), already the site of a fortress and probably also of a small town.¹³ Located where the gorge of the Tsaghkadzor River joins that of the larger Akhurian River, Ani was built on a triangular spit of land with the ravines of the two rivers as defenses on the east and west, its third side protected by a double wall flanked with towers and pierced by large, handsome gates. The first of the two walls was erected by King Ashot III "the Merciful" (952-77) in 964; the second built by Smbat II "the Conqueror" (977-89) was completed in 978.¹⁴

Under Ashot III and his sons, Smbat II and Gagik I (989-1020), Bagratuni Armenia reached the height of its power, fielding an army of 80,000 troops, acquiring through marriage the northern half of the vast principality of Siunik, and extending its suzerainty not only over the principalities of Parisos, Khachen, and other eastern Armenian states but also for a time over the Muslim emirs of Tiflis, Dvin, and Goghtn, whom, however, the Bagratunis were never able to dislodge.¹⁵ Ani grew to be a city of some 100,000 people. Known to the Byzantines as Anion and to the Georgians as Anisi, it was a very large urban complex for that time and much larger than any contemporary city in Western Europe. Like most eastern cities, Ani was divided into three parts: a citadel, a walled enclosure or *shahastan* which surrounded it, and the suburban areas outside the ramparts. A troglodyte (cave) city of some four hundred dwelling units and thirty chapels honeycombed the rock surface upon which the city was built and opened into the ravines. Here, one presumes, were the dwellings of the poorer classes.¹⁶

¹³ *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol. 2 (1976), p. 197, and vol. 5, p. 342.

¹⁴ Jules Mourier, *Guide au Caucase* (Paris, 1894), pp. 163-64.

¹⁵ Cyril Toumanoff, "Armenia and Georgia," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, pt. 1: *The Byzantine Empire: Byzantium and Its Neighbours* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 614-16.

¹⁶ For Ani, see M.-F. Brosset, *Rapports sur un voyage dans la Géorgie et dans l'Arménie* (St. Petersburg: Académie impériale des sciences, 1851); idem., *Les ruines d'Ani* (St. Petersburg: Académie impériale des sciences, 1860); Mourier, *Guide*, pp. 163-69; Lynch, *Armenia*, ch. 9; Wilhelm Barthold, "Ani," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1; Wilhelm Barthold and Vladimir Minorsky, "Ani," *New Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 507-08; Nikolai Marr, *Ani: Knizhnaia istoriia goroda i raskopy* [Ani: History Book of the City and Excavations] (Moscow, 1930); Leo, *Ani* (Erevan: Hay-pethrat, 1946); Nicole and Jean-Michel Thierry, "Ani, ville morte du Moyen âge ar-

In this period, Ani was known as “the city of a thousand churches” (there appears to have been a much more modest but still impressive total),¹⁷ and its trade grew until it was said in the East that no caravan was on the road but for its sake. Tolls on the transit trade and taxes reaped from the export of textiles, metalwork, armor, jewelry, horses, cattle, salt, grain, wine, honey, timber, leather, and furs made the city extremely prosperous. Albeit Ani was a cosmopolitan capital, the Turkish authorities today ignore its Armenian inscriptions and assert that the city was so mixed in population that it is impossible now to assign it to any one people.¹⁸

Wealthy from the commerce that flowed in along the new trade routes of which the city was the nexus, Ani shortly became the center of an enormous building activity. Besides the splendid royal palace and the magnificent cathedral, the latter completed in the year 1000 by the renowned architect Trdat (whose redesigned dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople after its collapse in 989 has survived every earthquake to the present),¹⁹ the amenities of Ani included many fine homes and mansions, caravansarays (inns), baths, and a number of large and impressive churches.

King Gagik I erected the Church of Saint Gregory at Ani, and in his time the hexagonal church was built as well, while the monastery of Horomos or Khoshavank, 15 kilometers northeast of the city, was restored and designated as the site of the burials of the Bagratuni kings. In the northern part of the kingdom, Queen Khosrovanush, consort of Ashot III, alone founded two great monasteries, Haghbat and Sanahin, both of which quickly became important cultural centers outside the

ménien,” *Jardin des arts* 3 (Paris, 1960): 132-45; Varazdat Harutyunyan, *Ani kaghake* (Erevan: Haypethrat, 1964); *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol.1 (1974), pp. 407-12 (with map); S. Peter Cowe, ed., *Ani: World Architectural Heritage of a Medieval Armenian Capital* (Leuven, Belgium and Sterling, VA: Peeters, 2001). For other maps of the city, see Paolo Cuneo et al., *Ani*, no 12 in the series *Documenti di architettura armena* (Milan: Ares, 1984), pp. 10-11, 14-15. See also Hewsén, *Historical Atlas*, map 89.

¹⁷ The figure of 1001 is given by Matteos Urhayatsi [Matthew of Edessa] in his *Zhamanakagrutiun* [Chronicle], ed. Mampre Melik-Adamian and Nerses Ter-Mikayelian (Vagharshapat: Holy See of Echmiadzin, 1898); English trans. Ara Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades, Tenth to Twelfth Centuries: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), vol. 2, p. 22.

¹⁸ Information provided to the author by a young Turkish-American soldier doing his military service and posted to Ani, who served as my guide while visiting the ruins in 1999.

¹⁹ Toumanoff, “Armenia and Georgia,” p. 616.

capital.²⁰ These and other monasteries such as Khtskonk, Bagnayr, Mar-mashen, Horomos, and Haykadzor, like the churches of Ani, exhibit in their design and detail what has been called the Bagratid or Bagratuni style, that is, the distinctive evolution of Armenian architecture that took place at this time. This period also saw a great efflorescence of Armenian literature at these monasteries, where writers and scholars worked in their rich libraries and where many manuscripts were copied in their scriptoria. Both Ani and Kars became cultural centers. The ecclesiastical establishment naturally followed the court to Ani, the catholicos-patriarch of the Armenian Church moving there in 992 and remaining until 1045, when the incumbent followed the last king of Ani, Gagik II (1041/42-1045), to his new domains within the Byzantine Empire.²¹ Matthew of Edessa is eloquent on the splendors of the catholicosal court at Ani, supported, he asserts, by the revenues of 500 villages. More than 500 bishops and 700 dioceses are said to have been under his jurisdiction, with twelve bishops apparently forming a governing council at his palace.²²

But already, at the height of the kingdom's glory, the seeds of destruction were sown when the Bagratunis began parceling out their precious holdings to different branches of the family. In 963, Ashot III ceded the city of Kars with the district of Vanand to his younger brother Mushegh as a separate kingdom.²³ Either Ashot or his son and successor, Smbat II, allowed Ashot's younger son, Gurgen/Kiwrike, to establish a kingdom of his own centered to the northeast at Lori (Tashir).²⁴ Despite the noteworthy achievements of the Bagratunis and the brilliant literary, artistic, and architectural accomplishments of this

²⁰ Karo Ghafadaryan, *Haghbat*. (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1963); St. Mnazaganian [Stepan Mnatsakanyan] and Adriano Alpago-Novello, *Hakhpāt*, no. 1 in the series *Documenti di architettura armena* (Milan: Ares, 1968); O.Kh. Ghalpakhtchian and Adriano Alpago-Novello, *Sanahin*, no. 3 in the series *Documenti di architettura armena* (Milan: Ares, 1970).

²¹ Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*. 2d ed. (London: Mowbray, 1954), ch. 11.

²² Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 25.

²³ For the kingdom of Kars or Vanand, see Suren Eremyan "Karsi tagavorutyun" [Kingdom of Kars], in *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol. 5, p. 345; Cyril Toumanoff, "Armenia and Georgia," ch. 14; Robert Hewsen, *Armenia, A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 114 and maps 91 and 95.

²⁴ Ghevond Movsesian, *Lorii Kiurikian tagavorneru patmutiun* [History of the Kings of the Kiurikian Kingdom of Lori] (Vienna: Mekhitarist Press, 1925); French trans. Frédéric Macler, "Histoire des rois Kurikian de Lori," *Revue des études arméniennes* 8, fasc. 2 (Paris, 1927): 209-56; Toumanoff, "Armenia and Georgia," p. 617; Hewsen, *Historical Atlas*, p. 114 and maps 91, 94, 95.



The Bagratuni Kingdoms

silver age of Armenian culture, the period was also characterized by a great degree of political fragmentation in Caucasia, with boundaries and allegiances changing frequently. The geopolitical situation was a fluid one and characterized by continuous wars, not the least of which were those that brought the Byzantines onto the Armenian plateau further than they had been in more than 400 years.²⁵

In 1045, King Gagik II was forced to cede his kingdom to the Byzantine Empire under whose incompetent rule it was lost to the Seljuk Turks led by Alp Arslan in 1064. The Bagratuni kingdom of Vanand endured at Kars for just over a century (963–1065), until it, too, was taken by the Byzantines and soon after by the Turks. The kingdom of Lori survived until about 1100, with titular kings of Lori continuing to reign at such fortresses as Tavush and Matsnaberd until the thirteenth century.²⁶

The Last Centuries of Ani

Contrary to popular belief, the destruction of Ani by the Seljuks in 1064 did not lead to the abandonment of the city, which continued to exist, if not flourish, for almost another 500 years. Alp Arslan sold the city to Fadlun, Shaddadid emir of Ganja (Gandzak), who gave it to his grandson, Manuche (Minuchihr), founder of the Shaddadid dynasty of Ani.²⁷ The city then fell to the Georgians in 1161, who appointed as governors Ivane Orbeli and Giorgi Mkhargrdzeli, both of Armenian origin.

The Seljuk Turks retook the city in 1163, but it was won back by the Georgians in 1199. It was then sacked by the sultan of Ardebil in 1209 and later plundered again by the Mongols under Charmarghan in 1239, at which time much of its population was massacred. Not long afterwards, the Zakarian/Zakarid Armenian princes who now ruled Ani for the Georgian monarch, put what was left of the city up for sale. It was purchased by an emissary of Hulagu Khan, the grandson of Chinghiz Khan. By this time, the trade routes of the Middle East had begun to shift as a result of the Mongol conquests and their directing commerce through Persia and the Mediterranean via Cilician Armenia

²⁵ Hewsen, *Historical Atlas*, maps 87, 88, 91, 105.

²⁶ Toumanoff, "Armenia and Georgia," p. 620; idem, *Les dynasties de la Caucasic chrétienne* (Rome; C. Toumanoff, 1990), p. 125.

²⁷ Vladimir Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1953), pt. 2: "The Shaddadids of Ani," pp. 79–106.

in the south and through Mongol-dominated Russia to the north.²⁸ Thus, the future of Ani grew bleak.

Earthquakes had afflicted Ani from time to time (1064, 1131, 1263), but it was only after a devastating tremor of 1319 that large numbers of its remaining inhabitants began to leave the city, many moving on to foreign lands. By 1348, Ani appears to have become virtually abandoned.²⁹

The Later History of Kars and Alexandropol

The city of Kars was sacked by the Turko-Mongol chieftain Timur (Tamerlane) in the late fourteenth century and by the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (1574-95) two centuries later. Murad is said to have built, or at least restored, the citadel of Kars, replacing the earlier Armenian fortress that had stood on the same site. For a time, Kars formed a part of the Georgian principality of Samtskhe-Saatabago (or Meschia). Taken and retaken during the Turko-Persian wars of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, the town was ceded definitively to the Ottoman Empire by the peace treaty of 1639. Thereafter, it became the center of the *pashalik* (military province) of Childir, serving as the Ottoman advance military base against the Persian Empire on the northeast.³⁰

In 1828, Persian (Eastern) Armenia became a part of the Russian Empire and with it the old Armenian land of Shirak. Fifty years later, the Russians acquired the Ottoman pashalik of Kars, comprising more or less the old Armenian principality of Vanand. Not far from Ani in Shirak, the village of Gümrü (the old Armenian fortress of Kumayri) now began its rise to prominence.³¹ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Gümrü was a small Muslim village located in what before the Russian occupation was the southernmost Georgian district of Shuragel (Shoragial). Annexed to the Russian Empire in 1804, the village became a Cossack station on the Russo-Turkish frontier, and a sizable Russian garrison existed there by 1817. In 1837, the emerging town was renamed Alexandropol or Aleksandropol (properly, Aleksan-

²⁸ Ani, in the series *Documenti di architettura armena*, pp. 17, 19.

²⁹ For different views on the ultimate abandonment of Ani, see the chapters by Claude Mutafian and Tom Sinclair in this volume—ed.

³⁰ Lynch, *Armenia*, p. 407; Hewsen, *Historical Atlas*, maps 129, 132, 133.

³¹ For the Russian expansion into South Caucasia, campaign by campaign, see, John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans, Green, 1908); W.E.D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

drapol) after the Empress Aleksandra Feodorovna, wife of Tsar Nicholas I (1825–55), who visited the city that year. In the Russo-Persian war of 1826–28, it served as the base for the Russian advance against the Persian *khanate* of Erevan, which was the core of Persian Armenia. Under Russian rule, Alexandropol rapidly became the largest town of Russian Armenia. Inhabited almost exclusively by Armenians, it had the distinction of being, despite its Russian garrison, the only preponderantly Armenian city in the region. Thereafter, until the Russian acquisition of Kars in 1878, Alexandropol remained the center of the Russian defense system in Armenia, a major military installation being erected there with a citadel, earthworks, and defensive works of brick and stone.³²

The town, built almost entirely by the Armenians themselves, was laid out on a grid plan in the Russian manner, with heavy, one-story stone buildings, private houses surrounded by small gardens, wide cobblestone streets, and a spacious plaza dominated by the black tufa Cathedral of the Holy Trinity (built 1859–74), a large but tasteless structure, destroyed in the earthquake of 1988. There were three other Armenian churches in Alexandropol, besides an Armenian Catholic church and a Russian Orthodox church serving the Russian garrison. A Greek Orthodox church dedicated to Saint George was founded by Greek immigrants from Erzerum, who had joined the Armenians in their flight to Russian territory following the evacuation of Erzerum by General Paskevich in 1829.³³

Because of restrictions imposed by the Russian government, there were only three Armenian schools in the whole of Alexandropol, all of them on the elementary level.³⁴ Although the city had much commerce, its bazaar was simple and unattractive. Nevertheless, Alexandropol was a bustling economic and commercial center, and, in its modest way, a center of Armenian culture. Here there was an Armenian theater, for example, and here flourished the last of the traditional Armenian *ashughs* or troubadours, such as Jivani, Sheram, Fahraz, and Hayat.³⁵ In the 1880s, Alexandropol had 21,000 inhabitants (not counting the garrison).³⁶ By the time of H.F.B. Lynch's expedition in the early 1890s, the population had grown to 30,000, about twice as large as that

³² Lynch, *Armenia*, ch. 9; Mourier, *Guide*, p. 162; "Leninakan," in *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol. 4 (1978), pp. 542–56.

³³ Lynch, *Armenia*, p. 128.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

³⁵ *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol. 4, p. 543.

³⁶ Mourier, *Guide*, p. 173.

of Erevan, the capital of the province (*guberniia*) within which Alexandropol lay.³⁷ Not far from Alexandropol, travelers still marveled at the monastery of Marmashen, another achievement of the Bagratuni era constructed between 988 and 1029, a wonderful example of the architectural style of that earlier period.

Unlike Erevan, where the construction of modern buildings has been accomplished by the deliberate and almost total obliteration of the earlier city, Soviet Alexandropol—known as Leninakan from 1924 to 1990 and now once again Gyumri—was laid out around the existing structures, resulting in the preservation of an example of a charming tsarist provincial town. Declared a historical preserve in 1980, the town was so well built, it might be mentioned, that it survived the earthquake that destroyed the new, shoddily built Soviet quarters in 1988. As the second largest city of Soviet Armenia, Leninakan received a certain amount of attention with the construction of a concert hall, theater, and other cultural establishments. The mansion of Dzitoghents, one of the wealthiest Armenian merchant of tsarist times, was preserved as a museum of pre-Soviet Armenian town life.³⁸

The Province of Kars

The pashalik of Kars and the adjoining pashalik of Childir figured greatly in the three wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire (1828-29, 1853-56, and 1877-78). Once definitively occupied by the Russians in 1878, however, the two former Ottoman pashaliks were joined together as the Kars *oblast'* or military province. At the same time, the province was divided into four military districts (*okrugs*), from north to south: Ardahan, Olti, Kars, and Kaghisman, each centered at a small town bearing the same name.³⁹

Once under Russian rule, the city of Kars immediately became the new center of the Russian defensive system in Transcaucasia, whose

³⁷ Lynch, *Armenia*, p. 123. The population of Alexandropol according to an earlier census in 1886 was 24,230 of whom 22,920 were Armenians, including some 200 Armenian Catholics.

³⁸ Personal observation.

³⁹ Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, pp. 20-27, 80-95, 113-210 *passim*; Humphry Sandwith, *A Narrative of the Siege of Kars* (London: John Murray, 1856), pp. 133ff. For the Kars *oblast'* see Artashes M. Poghosyan, *Sotsial-intesakan haraberutiunnere Karsi marzum* [Socio-Economic Relations in the Kars Oblast'] (Erevan: Haypethrat, 1961); "Karsi marz" [Province of Kars], in *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*, vol. 5, pp. 346-47, and map facing p. 368.

headquarters was advanced here from Alexandropol (which nevertheless retained a garrison) and whose security was based largely on the fortifications and eleven outlying forts planned by the British for the Turks during the unsuccessful Russian siege of the town in 1855.⁴⁰ In the 1880s, Kars was still a small town of about 7,000 inhabitants but boasted a governor's residence, post office, carriage post, and a single hotel grandiosely called "The America." A medieval Armenian church, a mosque, and a modestly stocked bazaar completed the ensemble.

By the time of Lynch's journey a decade later, the old Turkish town was gradually being replaced by a new community built in the Russian style, with officers' residences, the usual onion-domed Orthodox church, and single-storey houses and shops built of stone. The bazaar remained, of course, and the town, virtually treeless, was endowed with a small park by the Russians, with a club and a place for dancing. The population, not counting the garrison, was at that time reduced to about 4,000, and was composed of 2,500 Armenians, 850 Turks, 300 Greeks, and 250 Russians. Kars was said to have had 10,000 inhabitants prior to the siege of 1855 during the Crimean War, the decline in population largely the result of the departure of Muslims who had lived there prior to the Russian occupation. The town was constantly thronged with transients, however, mostly Armenian refugees from the Kurdish depredations in the Turkish provinces seeking security under Russian rule. The famed tenth-century Armenian Cathedral of the Holy Apostles, used as a mosque under the Turks, was restored to Christian worship by the Russians but as an Orthodox church intended for use by the Russian garrison rather than as an Armenian one. The city, moreover, became the seat of a Russian Orthodox bishop. In an attempt to secure their hold on this region, the Russians began to settle small colonies of Russian sectarians—Molokans and Dukhobors—in the vicinity of Kars.⁴¹ In 1919, during the period of the first Armenian republic, the church was reconsecrated as an Armenian cathedral. As late as the 1890s, there were but two Armenian

⁴⁰ Lynch, *Armenia*, pp. 397-98.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 405-08; Mourier, *Guide*, p. 173. To the north of Kars were established the Russian villages of Blagodarnoe, Romanovka, Malaia Vorontsovka, Romanovo, Novo-Pokrovka, Spasovska, Novo-Petrovka, Olshanka, and the largest, Granaderskoe (built on the site of the historic Armenian village of Zarishat); to the south lay Petrovka, Novo-Estonskoye, Aleksandrovka, Vladikars, Novo-Mikhailovka, and, nearer the town of Sarikamish, Novo-Selim. An isolated Russian village, Nikolaevka, was established northwest of Ardahan. Russian sectarians were also settled in the province of Erevan.

schools in Kars, one for boys and one for girls, and one Russian school. Eventually, however, matters improved, and Kars, too, had a noted Armenian secondary school by 1914.

After the Russian revolutions of 1917, the Russian army abandoned the province. Its defense was taken over by small Armenian forces, but Soviet Russia surrendered the area to the Ottoman Empire in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, and the Armenians were driven out by a Turkish offensive in the spring of that year.⁴² Following the surrender of the Ottoman Empire to the Allies in October, 1918, local Muslim notables organized a local ad hoc governing council until it was suppressed in April of 1919 by British forces protecting the Baku to Batum railway and oil pipeline. Kars was then incorporated into the recently-formed Republic of Armenia until it was captured by the Turkish Nationalist army at the end of October 1920.

At present, Kars is one of the more westernized towns of what the Turks now call Eastern Anatolia. The population is predominantly Turkish rather than Kurdish, unlike most other parts of the high plateau. As might be expected, the streets are full of soldiers. The tenth century Armenian Cathedral of the Holy Apostles still stands, having at various times been shuttered up, used as the city museum, or refurbished as a mosque. When used as a museum, the most-impressive exhibits were two pairs of magnificently carved wooden doors of the nineteenth century. Labeled as coming from an "orthodox" church, one pair has a clear Armenian inscription across the top. Despite the passage of ninety years since the Turkish reoccupation of Kars, the Russian influence is still very apparent. The tsarist buildings survive together with the quaint nineteenth century street lamps projecting from their walls, and in the hotel dining room, when the band plays the appropriate music, the waiters will demonstrate their prowess at dancing the *Lezginka*, a North Caucasian dance brought in by the Russian troops during the fifty-year Russian possession of the town.⁴³

Although still deserted, the city of Ani has become a tourist attraction, although the number of tourists who get that far east is not great. A glance at the sketch of the city made by M.-F. Brosset in the mid-nineteenth century shows how sadly deteriorated the remains have be-

⁴² For the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in regard to Kars, see Antoine Poidebard, "Le Transcaucase et la République d'Arménie dans les textes diplomatiques, du traité de Brest-Litovsk au traité de Kars (1918-1921)," *Revue des études arméniennes* 3 (1923): 66-67.

⁴³ Personal observation, 1998 and 1999.

come since that time.⁴⁴ One half of the Church of the Redeemer (Holy Savior) collapsed in 1959; the rest fell in the 1990s. The cathedral, its cupola long gone, has developed a massive gap in one corner. Much money has been spent by the Turkish authorities to restore the city's massive walls but little has been done to guarantee the survival of the few remaining churches. An interesting relic is the Seljuk mosque—formerly as ruined and neglected as the Armenian churches but now being restored. It is said to have been the first mosque ever erected in Armenia and the earliest harbinger of the Islamicization and Turkification of the region that has continued to this day.

While the Armenians have been gone for decades from Vanand/Kars, the old land of Shirak has remained a part of the successive first, second (Soviet) and third (present-day) Armenian republics and is still a diocese of the Armenian Church. Alexandropol/Leninakan/Gyumri, overlooked by Mount Aragats and from afar by Mount Ararat, is now the second largest city of the country and much of the future of Armenia lies in this area. Here, not far to the west of Gyumri, stands a statue of a woman enthroned, a torch held aloft in one hand, her hair streaming backward in the wind. Only when one walks behind the seated figure does one see what is clearly visible to the Turks: that the hair suggests a dragon's mouth and that the flames of the torch portray a claw reaching out in the direction of the Turkish frontier.

⁴⁴ Brosset, *Les ruines d'Ani*, vol. 2, plates.